

# Colorado's next wolves won't come from Washington tribes, leaving state to search again for new source

August 5 2024, by Elise Schmelzer, The Denver Post

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The Washington tribes that agreed to provide wolves to Colorado's reintroduction program have rescinded their offer, forcing state wildlife

officials to seek a different source—a search that has proved difficult in the past.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation said they would no longer provide the wolves after speaking with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, which has reservation land in Colorado. The Washington tribes—which had been expected to be a major source for the next round of the reintroduction effort—withdraw their agreement in a June 6 letter to Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

"It has come to our attention that necessary and meaningful consultation was not completed with the potentially impacted tribes," wrote Jarred-Michael Erickson, chairman of the Colville business council, in the letter. "Out of respect for the sovereignty, cultures and memberships of Indian Tribes in Colorado and neighboring states, who may be impacted by this project, the Colville Tribes cannot assist with this project at this time."

Colorado voters in 2020 narrowly decided to reintroduce [gray wolves](#) and mandated that [state wildlife officials](#) do so by Dec. 31, 2023.

The plan detailing how CPW will execute the reintroduction effort states that the agency should release a total of 30 to 50 wolves within the next few years, a target it plans to reach by relocating 10 to 15 wolves every winter.

The controversial vote has caused deep frustration in Colorado's ranching communities, where people say the wolves will negatively impact their businesses and ways of life. Support for the reintroduction primarily came from urban Front Range communities, while the rural areas where wolves would live opposed the measure.

Since the first December releases, wolves have killed or injured at least

14 cattle and nine sheep—including eight sheep killed or injured last weekend.

Documents from the Colville Tribes' business council show that the council discussed the issue on June 6 after learning Colorado officials "failed to consult" with the Southern Ute Tribe about the wolves.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe has concerns about the wolves' potential impact on livestock, deer and elk herds and their use of the Brunot Area hunting rights reserved for [tribal members](#), tribal leadership said Thursday in a statement.

Tribal leaders said they would continue to work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife "to establish a framework for working together that enables the state to implement its reintroduction program while simultaneously recognizing the sovereign authority of the Tribe on tribal lands and the interest shared by the Tribe and the State in the Brunot Area."

So far, CPW's monthly maps showing where the wolves have roamed have indicated activity in the central and northern mountains, far from the Southern Utes' southwestern Colorado reservation. But plans call for the next round of releases to occur farther south.

Colorado wildlife officials struggled last year to find a state or tribe willing to provide wolves for reintroduction here. The three states identified as ideal for sourcing wolves—Idaho, Montana and Wyoming—all rejected Colorado's request for wolves.

CPW spokesman Joey Livingston declined to discuss source negotiations and said the agency would issue a statement when it finds a source.

"We continue speaking with other potential sources of wolves," he wrote in an email, "and will take great care in implementing the plan to create a

self-sustaining wolf population while minimizing impacts on our landowners, rural communities, agricultural industries and partners."

In October, Oregon agreed to provide up to 10 wolves over the coming winter. Ten wolves captured in Oregon were released in Colorado in December.

In January, CPW signed the agreement with the Colville Tribes for up to 15 wolves during the 2024–2025 winter.

Colorado wildlife officials have also talked with Washington state officials about potentially capturing wolves there. While Washington officials previously said they could not provide wolves for the first release, they indicated they were open to further conversations.

2024 MediaNews Group, Inc. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Colorado's next wolves won't come from Washington tribes, leaving state to search again for new source (2024, August 5) retrieved 6 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-08-colorado-wolves-wont-washington-tribes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.